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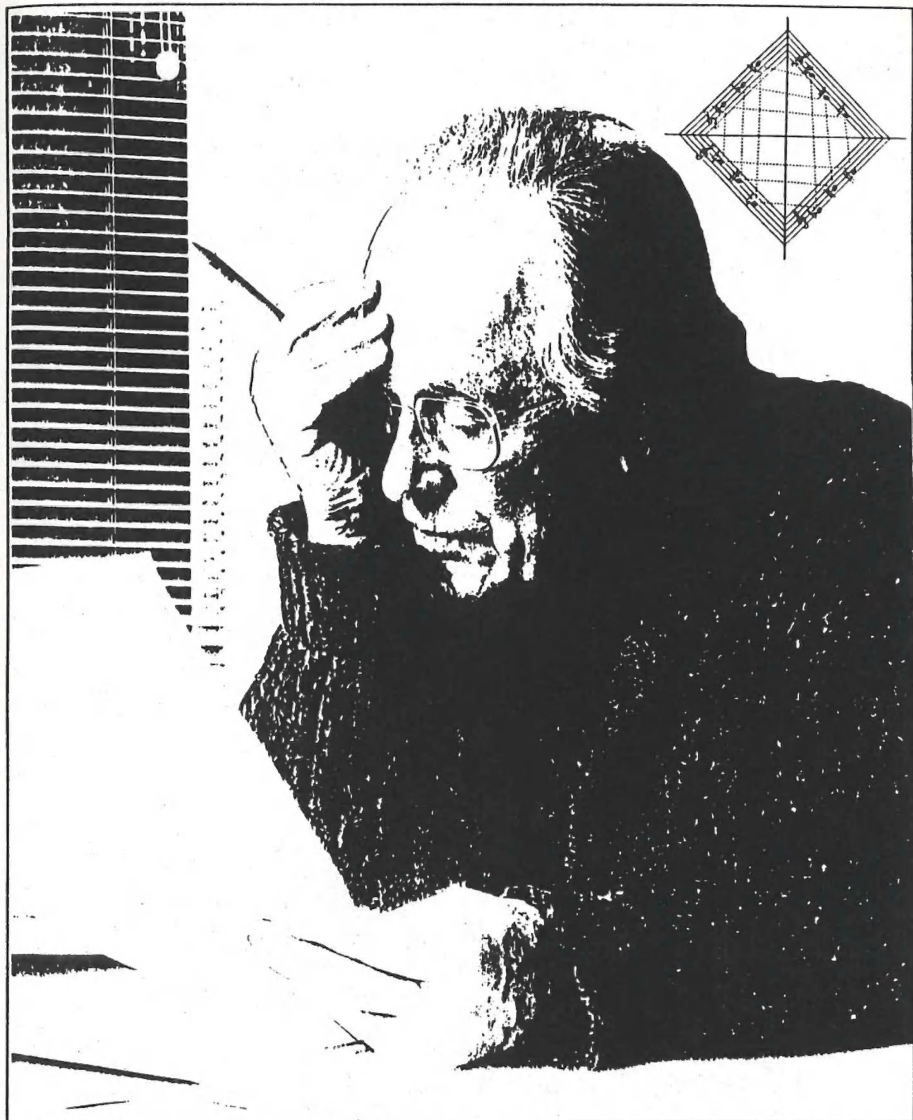


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season **1996**
ninety 7

Robert Aitken Artistic Director

new music concerts presents:
John Beckwith—A Portrait



8:00pm friday, october 11, 1996
Glenn Gould Studio

A MESSAGE FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Welcome to New Music Concerts' 26th season. I hope that you find our 1996-97 series enticing and that you will attend as many of our concerts as possible. We are still weathering this period of financial constraint and the many conservative influences resulting from it. The state of the economy has become the great leveler, forcing contemporary music organizations in Ontario to present the most modest seasons in their histories. However, within these limitations, I still feel we have created a contrasted and exciting series.

A few years ago, in a program message, I mentioned that as a reflection of world politics, the general style of contemporary composition had become more conservative, and in that sense, more accepted by the general public. I now feel styles have moved even further in this direction. With the development of international free trade and the opening of national borders, people are becoming extremely protective of their cultures. Perhaps the accessibility to unlimited quantities of information through technology, often referred to as 'information overload', has also created a fear of losing that which is uniquely our own. Whatever the reason, I have the impression that music is becoming even less adventurous and that composers are not looking far beyond their immediate environment for their inspiration or influences. Within this attitude lingers a certain danger of becoming inbred, or as Lutoslawski once said, 'caricatures of ourselves'.

During a recent tour to Japan, the idea was put forward that Takemitsu may have been the last truly international Japanese composer and that most young composers were not really interested in being known internationally. I find that to be true in most countries at the moment, in Canada as well. There seems to be enough satisfaction in being recognized within one's immediate circle. Even in the choice of programs, new music organizations in each part of the country seem to be basically looking after their own with perhaps a token foreign Canadian.

Our series also reflects this trend. But at the same time, as in years past, we are still attempting to stress the importance of looking outwards for new ideas, to keep in touch with the world artistic community and not allow our musical taste and aspirations to become too enclosed.

The sad passing of Toru Takemitsu, a long time friend of many of us in Toronto, cannot go by without notice. On the anniversary of his death he will be remembered in a concert performed by several musicians who knew and loved him. We have lost many important composers recently, among them John Cage, Morton Feldman, Witold Lutoslawski and Isang Yun, most of whom visited Toronto under New Music Concerts auspices. But one icon of the 20th century whom we failed to persuade to come here was Luigi Nono. In fact his music is rarely performed in Toronto and requires such a special acoustical treatment that we invited two musicians who knew him well to assist with a commemorative evening. One of these musicians, contrabassist Stefano Scodanibbio, is an important composer in his own right and will perform a solo concert in the Music Gallery a few days later.

In a new performance space for us, the Design Exchange, we will present the North American première of a work described by the noted German architect Bruno Taut and brought to realization by Jens Peter Ostendorf with important visuals by Canadians Henry Jesionka and Peter Mettler. Our Canadian content is significant and representative, beginning with a program devoted to one of Canada's most invaluable creative artists, John Beckwith. In January, we will present a concert of West Coast composers performed by Vancouver's New Music Society and in June, end the season with a program including three Canadian premières as part of our contribution to the Northern Encounters Festival. As always we value the support from all levels of government and the private sector, the CBC and, for this upcoming season, the Goethe-Institut, the Istituto Italiano di Cultura and the Japan Foundation. We do hope you will enjoy our season and are looking forward to meeting you at our concerts. Your help and ideas are always welcome.

Robert Aitken

Sunday, October 11, 1996, 8:00 PM
Glenn Gould Studio
Canadian Broadcasting Centre

new music concerts
presents

John Beckwith

a portrait

Programme

Anton Webern (1883-1945)

Quartet Op. 22 (1930) Dur. 7'

1. Sehr mäßig

2. Sehr schwungvoll

Fujiko Imajishi, violin, Raymond Luedeke, clarinet,
Peter Lutek, tenor saxophone, John Hess, piano

John Beckwith (b. 1927)

After-images, after Webern (1994) Dur. 10'

Rachel Gauk, guitar, David Hetherington, cello

John Beckwith

Quartet (1977) Dur. 18'

New Music Concerts String Quartet

Fujiko Imajishi, violin

Paul Meyer, violin

Steven Dann, viola

David Hetherington, cello

INTERMISSION

programme

Alice Ping Yee Ho (b. 1958)

***Seraphim* (1996) • Dur. 11'**

Les Allt, flute, Keith Atkinson, oboe,
Raymond Luedeke, clarinet, Kathleen McLean, bassoon,
Joan Watson, horn, James Spragg, trumpet,
Gordon Sweeney, trombone, Mark Tetrault, tuba,
Fujiko Imajishi and Paul Meyer, violins, Laura Wilcox, viola
and Simon Fryer, cello
Robert Aitken, conductor

John Beckwith

***Eureka* (1996) • Δ Dur. 20'**

Robert Aitken, flute, Keith Atkinson, oboe,
Raymond Luedeke, clarinet, Kathleen McLean, bassoon,
Joan Watson, horn, James Spragg and Michael White, trumpets,
Gordon Sweeney, trombone, Mark Tetrault, tuba,

**This evening's concert is being recorded
for future broadcast on CBC Stereo's
"2 New Hours" Sundays @10:05 PM**



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Anton Webern, **Quartet Op. 22** (1930)
programme note by Daniel Foley

Throughout his life (1883-1945), Anton Webern's music was rarely heard outside the intimate circle of his mentor Arnold Schoenberg's acolytes; yet not long after Webern's untimely demise his compositions came to have an influence that overshadowed that of Schoenberg himself. By 1955 Igor Stravinsky was to proclaim:

The 15 September 1945, the day of Anton Webern's death, should be a day of mourning for any receptive musician.

We must hail not only this great composer but also a real hero. Doomed to a total failure in a deaf world of ignorance and indifference he inexorably kept on cutting out his diamonds, his dazzling diamonds, the mines of which he had such a perfect knowledge.

Webern's last eleven compositions—from his first extended serial composition, the *String Trio* of 1927 to the *Second Cantata* of 1944—mark a return to instrumental composition after a decade dominated by vocal works. They also constitute that part of his repertoire which was to have the greatest fascination for the post-war generation of European composers. The canons, palindromes and variations that permeate these works provided a model for the compositional process which, to paraphrase Pierre Boulez, allowed one to deduce the structure of a work solely from contrapuntal functions without resorting to the baroque and classical forms that Schoenberg and the majority of composers had appropriated since the 1920s.

The *Quartet Opus 22* consists of a slow and a fast movement; an additional fast opening movement was sketched but abandoned. The score is dedicated to the modernist Austrian architect Adolf Loos (1870-1933), on the occasion of his 60th birthday.

The serial structure of the work, though not as symmetrical

as that of his later compositions, nevertheless reveals a natural scientist's fixation with molecular patterns:



notes

The *Quartet* was introduced to Toronto audiences in a recital organized and performed by pianist Glenn Gould in November of 1954. New Music Concerts is pleased to be able to present this work in the concert hall dedicated to Gould's memory.

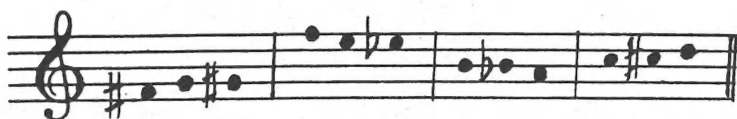
After-images, after Webern (1994)
programme note by John Beckwith

Speaking with students in the early 1990s, it surprised me to find that the music of Anton Webern was hardly known to them. For my generation, Webern was one of the great originals of musical modernism. Both John Cage and Morton Feldman often recounted how profoundly a New York performance of his Symphony Opus 21 in the early 1950s influenced them. For Barbara Pentland in the mid-50s and John Weinzweig in the early 60s the "discovery" of Webern had decisive consequences in works by these two Canadian composers. There are many other examples. Is it all forgotten and passé? I hope not.

I continue to regard Webern's art as essential to the character of music in our time—not just in the historical phase (circa 1955-70) summed up in the term "post-Webernian." The brevity and compression of

his pieces, their eccentric mood-swings, their refined coloration, their fragmentation of ideas (one critic called it "pulverization"), all contribute to a music of deeply "twentieth-century" expression. Moreover a more ageless feature, the detail of its workmanship, inspires awe.

A sketchbook of Webern's last months shows that he had begun an "opus 32" (his completed works end at Opus 31). Conceived at first as a chamber concerto, the plan grew for a cantata on a text by Hildegard Jone, his frequent collaborator. The set which he evolved for this hardly-begun composition is highly interesting:



Designed in four groups of three semi-tones each, it amounts almost to the ultimate reduction of a twelve-note set to its model, the tempered chromatic scale.

I spoke to Peter Higham in early 1992 of this intriguing set and of my hope to (some day) investigate it compositionally. He expressed interest as a member of the former Webern Trio (formed mainly to perform Webern's challenging Opus 18, his only composition with guitar), and wondered if I might compose my "Webern homage" for the cello-guitar duo he had recently formed with Danise Ferguson. In 1993-94 we talked and corresponded further, and Higham

successfully persuaded the Bell Fund at Mount Allison University to assist the commissioning of such a piece. The première coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of Webern's death, 15 September 1995.

The title **After-images, after Webern** (pun intended) associates the work with Webern and with the set on which I based it, and also associates it with an optical effect which seemed to me akin to the interruptions, mirrorings, and half-tones (pun intended) of this music. It may resemble Webern's at moments, but, despite the borrowing of his set, is intended neither to imitate nor to parody him, but merely in a modest way to perpetuate, and pay tribute to, his spirit.

Quartet (1977)

Programme note by John Beckwith

Most composers write string quartets as student exercises. For some reason I escaped doing so, and the work which I wrote in 1977 was in fact my first encounter with the medium. The experience made me understand the continuing hold which it has on composers—a hold which has endured for longer perhaps than that of any other instrumental medium.

The **Quartet** incorporates images of kinds of string music which one might regard as indigenous to Canada—banjo, guitar, ukelele, mandolin, and, above all, 'old-time' fiddle. Although the **Quartet** contains no actual quotations it evokes at various points these instrumental colours and the literature associated with them.

Open string sonorities are prominent in the piece. The two violinists are asked to share a third instrument, tuned E—B-flat—E-flat—A-flat, which affords open-string sounds on unexpected pitches, as well as an extended repertoire of natural harmonics.

*The five sections of the **Quartet** are continuous: the silences which separate them are measured and more or less short, and are therefore not thought of as moments of inter-movement relaxation.*

Section one is a short introduction of rapidly changing colours. Section two consists of three variations, showing some of the 'folk-like' sounds mentioned. Section three is a long-sustained melody presented first unmuted by the viola while the other instruments weave canonic, muted, free lines around it; in a second verse, the same long melody (in a different form) is presented by the second violin and later taken over by the cello, while the rest of the quartet again entwines various muted comments. Finally a third verse combines the previous two in pairs of non-muted instruments, always set against muted echoes in the remaining pair, and there is a short end-section, rather inconclusive in feeling. Section four is a brief transition, juxtaposing scales and chord-figures previously heard. In section five, a 'fiddle-tune' is played simultaneously with ideas of a more personal and urgent expression. Here again there are three 'verses', the first in the straight violin, the second in the differently-tuned one. An interlude forestalls the climactic third verse, where the previous two verses are played simultaneously. The work ends with some brief recollections of ideas from sections one and three.

*The foregoing is a guide to the **Quartet's** outward features but says little of the feelings and attitudes the work may contain. I do not regard music as a pure or abstract phenomenon, even in such a rarified Western-art medium as the string quartet. Connections with tradition, with a social environment, and with human-life attitudes are bound to be apparent. But what they are is for individual listeners to determine.*

Beckwith's **Quartet** was commissioned by the Orford String Quartet on a grant from the Canada Council and was first played by that ensemble in Montreal in February, 1978. The work is dedicated to Kathleen McMorow.

Seraphim (1996)

programme note by Alice Ho

According to the Book of Revelation, the Holy City shall descend from Heaven after the Final Judgement. This magnificent city is formed of great, high walls, with twelve gates guarded by twelve angels. As I contemplated writing a work for twelve players, the first thought that came to mind was the possibility of having each instrument representing these twelve angels, each of them possessing their own purpose and power. This image offered me the poetic license to compose something pure, yet forceful. The biblical prophecy is a reminder of the mystical force that governs the universe. Seraphim are the highest order of angels, possessing three pairs of wings; the music draws from this parallel by grouping the instruments into three quartets of woodwinds, brass and strings. They are seated in a formation resembling the six wings of an angel, with the conductor in the centre.

Eureka (1996)

programme note by John Beckwith

Ensemble music is, from one standpoint, a medium of simultaneous or overlapping dialogues. Spatial, directional, and antiphonal aspects may also arise, as observed in the works of Ives and Brant. I had as long ago as 1983 the notion of writing a piece for nine wind instruments, exploring such features, and even sketched out charts showing positions, groupings, and movements. I showed these one day to Robert Aitken and was pleased that he encouraged me to realize the plan.

***Eureka** may be considered as a drama for nine players, whose characters and interactions are suggested in the music. Solos, duets, and trios are overlapped by "conversational" comments; phrases circle the stage, again in solo, duo or trio form, or are echoed from front to back; at two points, three trios in three quite distinct tempi and moods take place simultaneously. A dramatic (or operatic) ensemble may indeed be evoked; another similarity may be to a collage in visual art. The title derives from various sources including the town of Eureka, California, which I passed through in June of this year, and Edgar Allan Poe's long prose-poem **Eureka**, composed in the year before his death, 1848, in which he invents a philosophical communication written in the year 2842 projecting numerous geometric and astro-nomic theories of the meaning of existence. On the other hand, I recall when asked why he borrowed Freud's title **Totem and Taboo** for one of his compositions, Harry Freedman said "I liked the sound." "Eureka" means "I have found it." I have found nothing; I just liked the sound.*

Biographies

biographies

John Beckwith—composer, writer, teacher and pianist—was born in Victoria, British Columbia, in 1927. He holds the Mus. B. and Mus. M. from the University of Toronto, and Mus. D. degrees (honoris causa) from McGill, Mount Allison, and Guelph Universities. A member of the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto, starting in 1952, he served as its Dean from 1970 to 1977. From 1984 to his retirement in 1990 he was Jean A. Chalmers professor of Canadian Music professor of Canadian Music and director of the Faculty's Institute for Canadian Music.

His compositions include four operas, orchestral pieces, songs, chamber music, compositions for chorus, music for children and a series of "collages" in collaboration with the poet and playwright James Reaney. Various of his pieces have been recorded on Radio Canada International, RCA-Victor, London/Select, Capitol, Melbourne, and Centredisc labels, and published by Berandol, Novello, Frederick Harris, Gordon V. Thompson, Jaymar and Waterloo.

He received his musical education in Toronto, 1945-50, under Alberto Guerrero and in Paris, 1950-52, under Nadia Boulanger. As a pianist, he gave numerous recital and broadcast performances between 1947 and 1953, including a lecture-recital on Bach's "Goldberg Variations". Besides directing student performances and performances of his own works, he was active 1981-91 in program planning and performances at the summer festival "Music at Sharon". In 1965, he was awarded a senior arts fellowship by the Canada Council. In 1972, he was awarded the annual Canadian Music Council Medal for services on behalf of music in Canada, in 1977, a Sesquicentennial long-service award by the University of Toronto, in 1983, a P.R.O. Canada Award, and in 1996, the Diplôme d'honneur of the Canadian Conference of the Arts. He was named "Composer of the Year" for 1984 by the Canadian Music Council. Governor-General Jeanne Sauvé appointed him a member of the Order of Canada in December, 1987. He was one of the 1994 recipients of the Toronto Arts Awards.

John Beckwith is a board member of the Encyclopedia of Music in Canada and the Canadian Musical Heritage Society, former board member of P.R.O. Canada, New Music Concerts, the Canadian Opera Company, and the Canadian Music Centre, and a member and former secretary of the Canadian League of Composers.

A native of Hong Kong, **Alice Ping Yee Ho** has lived in Canada since 1982. She has studied composition with John Eaton at Indiana University, John Beckwith at the University of Toronto and Brian Ferneyhough in Germany. A former piano student of Joseph Reitzes (USA) and Antonín Kubálek (Canada), Miss Ho has performed solo piano recitals of contemporary Chinese composers for broadcast by CBC's "Two New Hours" in 1992 and a recital at Toronto's Music Gallery sponsored by the Toronto Canadian Chinese Artists Centre in 1994.

Alice Ho's compositions have been performed and broadcast in Canada, the USA, England, Japan, Hong Kong and Korea. She is a recipient of numerous Young Composer's awards including the duMaurier Arts Ltd. New Music Festival, (1994), the Hamilton Philharmonic (1993), the Percussive Arts Society (1992), les Evenements du Neuf (1985), PROCAN (1983), and the International League of Women Composers (1982). Miss Ho has received commissions from the Ontario Arts Council and the Toronto Arts Council to compose works for percussionist Beverley Johnston, the Ardeleana Trio, and the Continuum new music ensemble. Her orchestral works have been performed by the Winnipeg Symphony, CBC Vancouver Orchestra, Hamilton Philharmonic, Huronia Symphony, Mississauga Symphony, Han Feng Chamber Orchestra and the Toronto Chinese Youth Orchestra.

Alice Ho is an associate of the Canadian Music Centre and a member of the boards of the Canadian League of Composers and the Association of Canadian Women Composers.

Rachel Gauk's arrival on the international music scene has been confirmed by several important debuts in recent seasons. She performed Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez* with the Toronto Symphony, presented a solo recital at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, and performed two concerti with the New World Chamber Orchestra in Mexico City. Her 1994/95 season included debut recitals in Canada, the United States, and England and appearances with the Edmonton, Kingston and Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony Orchestras. In 1996, she performed, with members of the Penderecki, the world premiere of Omar Daniel's newly-commissioned work for guitar at the Glenn Gould Studio in Toronto.

David Hetherington is a graduate of the Royal Conservatory of Music and the University of Toronto. He also studied with the renowned cellists Claus Adam, Andre Navarra and Paul Tortelier. A member of the Toronto Symphony since 1970, he has gained a reputation as both teacher and performer. He teaches cello at the Royal Conservatory and chamber music at the University of Toronto where his chamber music ensemble, *Amici*, is in residence. In addition to playing a series of concerts with international artists at the Glenn Gould Studio in Toronto, this popular chamber group has toured Canada, Europe and Mexico. Mr. Hetherington is also a founding member of the string quartet *Accordes*. He has performed often with New Music Concerts and recorded for CentreDiscs and the CBC.

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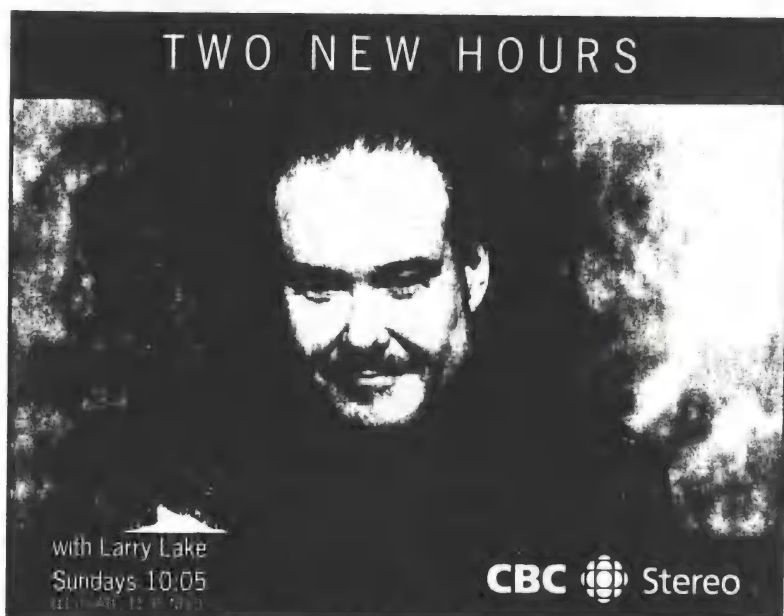
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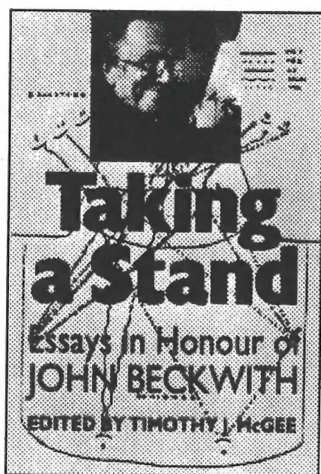


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Essays in Honour of John Beckwith

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